

CITY OF BALTIMORE

MARTIN O'MALLEY, Mayor



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Keeping Baltimore Cool with Code Red Heat Alert and Energy Assistance Plans

City Officials Unveil Preparations on Hot Weather Support for Vulnerable Residents and Seniors

Baltimore, MD – Using the mid-town Waxter Senior Center as a backdrop, City officials representing five agencies will announce a two-pronged strategy for handling the health risks of the city's most vulnerable citizens as the city enters into the hottest months of the year.

The strategy includes: (1) A **Code Red Heat Alert** plan to protect the most vulnerable on dangerously hot days; and (2) The **Baltimore City Energy Assistance Initiative**, which will link at-risk city residents to energy assistance programs.

Code Red Heat Alert is an integrated strategy across five city agencies to provide heat safety information and immediate relief to vulnerable and elderly city residents. The Health Commissioner will issue a "Code Red Heat Alert" when either the National Weather Service issues a heat advisory or when the Heat Health Watch Warning System developed by the University of Delaware predicts that the heat will be a serious health risk.

When a Code Red Heat Alert is in effect, the Department of Housing and Community Development will open cooling centers around the city for residents unable to use air conditioning. Additionally, the Commission on Aging and Retirement Education (CARE), the Police Department, Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods will coordinate outreach efforts targeted to citizens most in need. Such actions will include:

- Alerting community leaders, senior service organizations with reminders to watch out for elderly and vulnerable neighbors;
- Reaching out to citizens already identified as vulnerable;
- Urging residents to call 311 for heat safety tips, locations of cooling centers, and energy assistance referral.

Given the increase in energy costs beginning this month, the **Baltimore City Energy Assistance Initiative** is an effort to assist the most at-risk city residents in receiving help with high utility bills.

Health professionals in medical offices and Emergency Departments around the city will be asked to provide contact information for patients at risk for heat-related injury to the Health Department. Using a custom database, Health will relay the information to Housing's energy assistance team, which then will screen referred citizens for eligibility for an array of programs. CARE also will make contact to offer services and referrals. Additionally, surveillance of those in need comes from the Fire and Police Departments through daily contact with citizens.

Working collectively, the Departments of Health, Housing, Police, Fire, and OEM along with CARE have integrated existing city services creating a comprehensive and unique approach to saving the lives of Baltimore's most vulnerable citizens. Detailed plans covering both initiatives and hot weather safety tips are available on both the Health Department and OEM websites.

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